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U.S. AND RUSSIANS ARE HOLDING TALKS ON AIRLINE SAFETY

JAPANESE ALSO INVOLVED

Pact on Pacific Flights, Tied to Downing of Korean Jet, May Spur New Accords

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WASHINGTON, May 25 — The United States, the Soviet Union and Japan have been negotiating on air safety to avoid a repetition of the downing of a South Korean airliner by a Soviet fighter in 1983, American officials said today.

They said "some progress" had been made in the talks, which center on the northwest Pacific.

The latest round of negotiations ended Friday in Moscow, the officials said. No announcement was made in response to a Soviet request for as little publicity as possible. Unannounced rounds were previously held in Tokyo in February and here in March.

The negotiations are said by American officials and Soviet diplomats to have importance beyond air safety because they may affect a range of other Soviet-American issues.

Other Soviet Issues Affected

If agreement is reached on air safety, American officials said, the way may be open to negotiating a new civil aviation accord that would restore Aeroflot landing rights in the United States and allow an American carrier to resume flights to Moscow. This could lead to a cultural and scientific agreement and an exchange of consulates in Kiev and New York.

These are the kind of agreements that could be announced at a meeting between President Reagan and Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader. Both have professed an interest in a meeting, but Mr. Reagan said again in remarks made public today that no place or date had been set.

Interest in Summit Meeting

In written answers to questions submitted by the newspaper Il Tempo of Rome, Mr. Reagan said:

"If and when Mr. Gorbachev and I get together, which I hope will be soon, you can be sure, for the American part, that it will be in the spirit of good will, seriousness and a determination to explore whatever avenue may be open toward better understanding, reduced tensions and peace.

"Meetings do not in and of themselves guarantee progress. It is the overall relationship between our countries that counts, and this relationship is not enhanced when expectations about any one meeting are too high."

There has been confusion about the status of the projected meeting. In an exchange of correspondence, Mr. Reagan invited the Soviet leader to come to Washington at a mutually agreeable date. Mr. Gorbachev responded affirmatively but without signifying a date or place. When Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko met in Vienna on May 14, they apparently did not discuss details of such a meeting.

Earlier, Soviet sources had said that Mr. Gorbachev would probably go to New York in the fall to mark the 40th anniversary of the United Nations, but more recently, Soviet diplomats here have said that he was unlikely to go to New York and that any meeting should be in a neutral country. An American official said a few days ago that the two sides were engaged in "gamesmanship" with each waiting for the other to offer specific proposals.

In the interview with Il Tempo, Mr. Reagan said that he was not discouraged by the lack of apparent progress in the first round of the Geneva arms control talks.

A disagreement has emerged over how these three-part negotiations are to be conducted. The Soviet side is linking progress on strategic and medium-range nuclear weapons to United States agreement to curb research on a new space-based missile defense system. The United States insists that research cannot be restricted and that negotiations should proceed on nuclear weapon cuts. The second round begins next Thursday.

President Reagan, in commenting on the situation, told Il Tempo:

"I believe that it is far too early in this extraordinarily complex set of negotiations to speak of deadlock. We firmly oppose the idea that progress in one area of the negotiations should or must be held hostage to progress in any other area. Rigid insistence on such a self-defeating formula would violate both common sense and mankind's genuine interest in achieving the widest possible agreement on arms reductions."

He said that his "ardent desire" is that through "patient and serious and realistic negotiations we can make significant progress."

"It is imperative that we stick with

them and not let ourselves be discouraged by either the slow pace of progress or by the tactics which the Soviets themselves might from time to time adopt in the hope that these will weaken Western cohesion and resolve," he said.

The air safety negotiations stemmed from the shooting down by a Soviet fighter of the South Korean plane on Sept. 1, 1983, killing all 269 aboard. The plane had entered Soviet airspace on a flight from New York to Seoul via Anchorage, and inquiries later showed that there had been no contact between air controllers in the Soviet Union and in other countries regarding the position of the airliner.

The aim of the air safety talks, American officials said, is to provide assurances that military planes will not shoot down stray civilian planes and that all efforts will be made to provide better communication to prevent misunderstandings.

The Soviet Union, which contends that the plane was on an intelligence mission and that the Soviet military authorities acted properly, has been reluctant to publicize the air safety talks, according to the Americans, because it does not want to leave the impression that it concedes even implicitly that it might have been at fault.

The linkage among the Soviet-American issues arose when talks resumed last year at American initiative on a cultural exchange agreement and on going ahead with plans to set up the two new consulates, American officials said.

The cultural agreement, first signed in the late 1950's, had been routinely renewed every two years and was under negotiation in late 1979 when President Jimmy Carter suspended the negotiations as one of the reprisals for the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

President Carter also stopped the opening of consulates, which had been agreed to. He also suspended Aeroflot commercial service to New York. In 1981, President Reagan halted all Aeroflot service. Pan Am, which had been the American carrier to the Soviet Union, had earlier suspended its own service for commercial reasons.

When talks resumed last year, the Soviet side made it clear, American officials said, that there could be no cultural agreement or consulate exchange until Aeroflot was allowed back into the United States. The United States said there would have to be an agreement first on Pacific air safety.